

Testimony Supporting **HB No. 5155: AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFE STORAGE OF CANNABIS, CANNABIS PRODUCTS AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.**

February 22, 2022

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dr. Joseph B. Gallagher and I am a Pediatrician from Hartford, Connecticut. I am writing in support of **Raised HB No. 5155: An act concerning the safe storage of cannabis, cannabis products and prescription drugs.** This bill contains the necessary next steps for ensuring a decrease in the amount of marijuana overdoses in the pediatric population.

Marijuana ingestions cause harm to children. Children may suffer rapid onset of altered mental status or vomiting. Children may demonstrate poor coordination and slurred speech. In more severe cases, marijuana overdose can lead to depression of the central nervous system resulting in decreased respiratory rate, decreased heart rate, and decreased activity level to the point of lethargy, loss of consciousness, and even coma.

One major concern when caring for kids with marijuana poisoning is that often the caregivers are unable to tell me how many milligrams of THC were ingested. The toxic effects of marijuana can range from hours to days, and these effects are dose dependent. **This bill will require that amounts and concentrations of THC and cannabidiol be clearly marked on the packaging.** Having this information available could help physicians better predict complications in the treatment course. Additionally, **this bill will limit the amount of THC per serving and per unit of sale if unable to demarcate serving sizes (medical marijuana excluded).** Setting a limit on the dosage will mean that children, if exposed to cannabis product, will be less likely to be exposed to ultrahigh doses.

Other preventive measures include the **requirement of childproof packaging, and the prohibition of cannabis products that appeal to children.** I recall a particularly concerning case of marijuana overdose from a popular candy look-alike in which the child spent days in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. The distribution of gummies in fun shapes, and candies laced with THC needs to be stopped.

Furthermore, Pediatricians are mandated reporters of any suspected abuse or neglect from caregivers. Accidental ingestions cause a significant strain on social workers, ancillary staffing, and employees of the Department of Children and Families. This bill demands **development and distribution of materials pertaining to storing prescription drugs and cannabis and cannabis products in a manner that renders such items inaccessible to children.** Providing the education on safe storage will help to decrease the accidental ingestions.

Unintentional pediatric exposures to cannabis products have led to life-threatening toxicity in young children. We must take every measure to keep these products away from our children. This bill will surely aid in the prevention of future marijuana overdoses in children. For the foregoing reasons, I ask the Committee to support Bill 5155.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joseph B. Gallagher, DO

Hartford, CT.